

Results of the Community Character Survey



Survey Results



Results of the Community Character Survey

*Comprehensive Plan Workshops, July 16-19, 2001
City of Lynchburg Comprehensive Plan*

Mary Means & Associates, Inc.

Why a “Character” Survey

To gather information on ideas &
preferences about development.

Help the Steering Committee and
Planning Commission better understand
community values and interests.

Survey Structure

Process. . . Surveys were administered to 175 individuals during public workshops on the Lynchburg Comprehensive Plan. The workshops were held the evenings of July 16-19, 2001 at locations throughout the City.

Survey participants received a booklet with images of different places and instructions on how to record their impressions.

Images. . . 114 images were included in the booklet and shown on screen. Images were organized in three categories: Neighborhoods; Commercial Corridors & Districts; and Streets, Parking, & Public Spaces.

Ranking. . . Participants were asked to record their impressions of the images on a scale from negative five to positive five, with a ranking of zero indicating a neutral impression.

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Afterwards... After turning in their survey forms, participants discussed impressions of images and related planning issues.

A small sample of surveys were tabulated each night and the top ten and bottom ten were reported and discussed.

Survey Results



Top 10 & Bottom 10

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Top 10 Images



Bottom 10 Images



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Survey Results by Group



Neighborhoods

Single Family Housing



+1.06



-0.22

The image on the left, showing a large house on a narrow street with a front porch and picket fence, received a higher average rating than the image of large houses on the right.

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Single Family Housing



+1.74



+0.24

Participants responded favorably to the image of the house with a front porch and rear-yard garage and less favorably to the image of the house with a large garage as the dominant street-front design feature.

Single Family Housing



+1.61



-1.80

The image on the left, which shows a range of house designs, front porches, and shallow front yard setbacks, received high scores while the image on the right, showing house facades dominated by garages and repetitive designs, received low average scores.

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Apartments

+2.05



+2.21



-1.58



-0.99



Participants responded favorably to images of multi-family housing with generous landscaping, orientation to surrounding streets and sidewalks, and interesting building form and detailing.

Townhouses

+1.58



+1.55



-0.19



+0.85



The townhouses on the left with brick sidewalks, street trees, and rear garage access received higher average rankings than the townhouses on the right with front yard parking and poor connections to sidewalks.

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Neighborhood Streets



+3.02 (Top 10)



+2.72



-0.60

The left and center neighborhood images show narrow streets, on-street parking, porches, and landscaping. These images received higher average rankings than images of houses with large setbacks, wide streets, and no sidewalks.

Neighborhood Streets



+1.22



-0.86



-0.96

As with the previous slide set, the images of housing built in traditional styles and patterns scored higher than images of conventional suburban residential development.

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Survey Results by Group



Commercial Corridors & Districts

Retail Shops

+1.57



-1.86



+1.91



-2.17



Receiving high marks were images of retail shops with “Main Street” designs — traditional storefronts, on-street parking, small signs, street trees, and pedestrian amenities — lighting, decorative banners, planting, and benches.

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Mixed Use Buildings



+2.63



+2.45



+1.31

Images showing mixed use buildings — both new and old — with active storefronts, street trees, and on-street parking received some of the highest average scores. The image on the right is of a parking deck with a ground floor bank and café with outdoor seating.

Sidewalk Cafes



+3.18 (Top 10)



+2.80



+1.22

Images of sidewalks cafes received very high scores. Each image shows active storefronts, outdoor cafes with movable seating, canopies or awnings, and human-scale buildings.

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Shopping Centers



+2.42



+1.51



-2.07

Images of shopping centers with pedestrian amenities — benches, canopies and arcades, planting beds, outdoor seating, and interesting building forms — received higher than average scores.

Shopping Center Entrances



+2.57



+2.11



-1.79

Shopping center entries with landscaping, monument signs, and architectural treatments received high rankings.

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Franchise Design



+1.62



+1.33



-1.67

As shown in the left and center images, national chains often design buildings to compliment a community's design character. The image on the right, of a conventional design, received a much lower ranking than the others.

Franchise Design



+1.82



+1.28



-1.87

Franchise stores with generous landscaping, traditional architectural forms and detailing, and high-quality building materials received high scores.

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Franchise Design



+1.97



-2.22

Images of sensitively designed national chain stores received much higher average scores than chain stores with conventional suburban designs.

Suburban Retail



+2.01



-1.19



-2.35

Commercial uses with architectural interest and landscaping were rated significantly higher by survey participants than uses without these qualities.

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Service Stations

+2.36



-1.32



+1.70



-1.60



Images of service stations designed to fit with their surroundings—pitched roof canopies, landscaping, small-scale signs—received higher than average rankings.

Big Box Stores



+0.70



-2.10

While these images show similarly scaled stores in suburban settings, the store with landscaping, sidewalks, and brick detailing ranked highest.

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Big Box Stores



-0.58



-1.24



-2.83

The images of the stores on the left and center, showing landscaping and brick detailing, scored higher than the image of a large store with little or no landscaping.

Commercial Signs



-0.12



-0.31



-1.80



-3.25 (Bottom 10)

Survey participants responded more favorably to smaller scale monument signs than larger, auto-oriented pole signs.

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Outdoor Advertising



-3.39 (Bottom 10)

This image of a billboard received the third lowest ranking among the images in the survey.

Offices



+1.69



-0.48

Sensitively designed, well-landscaped suburban office buildings received high scores from survey participants.

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Light Industry



+0.77



+0.54



-2.98 (Bottom Ten)

Industrial developments with architectural interest, quality building materials, and landscaping received much higher scores than those with minimal investment in site and building improvements.

Self Storage



+2.10



-3.46 (Bottom Ten)

The high ranking image on the left shows a self storage facility designed to fit within a town center development. Features such as the ground floor windows, awnings, and corner entry help provide a human scale. The image on the right received the second lowest overall score.

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Survey Results by Group



Streets, Parking, & Public Spaces

Gateway Treatments



+3.31 (Top 10)



-0.55

The image on the left of a well-landscaped and maintained entry sign ranked fourth highest in the survey.

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Public Streets & Squares



+3.35 (Top 10)



3.14 (Top 10)

Images of these active, well-designed and maintained public places received some of the highest scores — numbers 3 and 7 respectively — in the survey. The image on the right is of a pedestrian plaza built above a 2-3 story, underground parking garage.

Commercial Streets



+2.94



-1.82

Active, traditional streetscapes, with human-scaled buildings framing public space, mature street trees, wide sidewalks, and pedestrian-scaled lighting, were favored over auto-oriented commercial streetscapes. (Note: Of the streets pictured above, the one on the left carries more traffic each day than the one on the right.)

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Commercial Streets

+3.50
(Top 10)



-2.88

+2.28



-2.66

Images of heavily landscaped commercial streets received some of the highest scores in the survey. Participants responded favorably to images of streets with trees, brick sidewalks, and planting between curbs and sidewalks.

Commercial Streets

+2.29



-3.19
(Bottom 10)

+2.61



-3.33
(Bottom 10)

Images of commercial streets with large signs, minimal landscaping, overhead utilities, and multiple curb cuts received some of the lowest scores in the survey.

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Intersections



+2.09



-2.20



-2.70

Images of intersections with street trees, underground utilities, sidewalks, and clearly marked pedestrian crossings received higher scores than those with minimal landscaping or pedestrian improvements.

Parking Lots



+2.91



+2.05



-0.45

Survey participants indicated a preference for heavily landscaped surface parking lots.

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Parking Lots



+1.89



+1.62



+1.38



-1.63



-2.42



-2.94 (Bottom 10)

Landscaped parking lots with pedestrian amenities received high scores in the survey.

Structured Parking

+1.81



-0.29



+1.33



-1.73



The images on the left, of sensitively designed and landscaped garages, outranked the images of unadorned decks.

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Pedestrian Crossings



+1.47



+0.47



-1.15

Images of well-marked, brick paved pedestrian crossings received higher scores than those with minimal marking or surface treatment.

Bus Stops



+2.19



+2.14



-1.43

Participants indicated a preference for well-designed bus stops with easy, safe access from sidewalks and pedestrian paths.

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Stormwater Management



+3.88 (Top 10)



+2.97 (Top 10)



-3.21 (Bottom 10)

The left and center images, showing stormwater management facilities designed as development amenities, received high scores. The image on the right, of a stormwater facility at the entrance of a new retail development, received one of the lowest scores.

Stormwater Management



+1.07



-3.63 (Bottom 10)

The higher ranking image on the left shows a stormwater facility that serves as a landscape amenity in a parking lot. The image on the right shows an unattractive stormwater facility experiencing erosion and sedimentation problems.

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Stream Valleys



+3.19 (Top 10)



-0.89

The high ranking image on the left shows a stream valley with stable banks and vegetative buffers, while the low ranking image on the right shows a stream with significant erosion and sedimentation.